



## Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact [support@jstor.org](mailto:support@jstor.org).

## LETTERS FROM A PRIVATE DUTY NURSE

## IV

## THE NURSES' LODGE.

DEAREST MARY:

Thanks for your good letter. You need not worry about me a bit. I am getting on capitally.

You know I have been doing institution work the past few years and I had really forgotten how funny private nursing can be. I suppose I mean how funny folks can be; for, of course, in private duty we see them, not on dress parade, but in negligé, so to speak.

I had a woman a few weeks ago at the Hotel Royale. She paid \$100 a month for her room, had lace night dresses and bewitching French gowns, powdered her face, dyed her hair, and read Marie Corelli. She did not care for good books, for children, for religion, nor for anything that I could make out, except having her own way and ordering people about. That was meat and drink to her. She dismissed me because I would not give her medicine that was not ordered whenever she asked for it. I was sorry I had not managed her better, for she was Dr. Frazer's case and he is one of the directors of the Lodge, you know.

What I started to write about was how funny the patient I have just had was while he was coming out of ether. Not many people talk, coming out of ether, I think, though they are nearly always in a panic for fear that they will. You know I did surgical work for Dr. Donne for three years, before he went to the Philippines. He always gave a hypodermic of atropia before etherizing, to quiet the nervous system; and none of his patients ever talked. I had a college boy once, though, who talked. Dr. West operated on him for cervical glands. I noted that he did not give the atropia and wondered if it would make any difference. I soon found out. As the ether began to wear off the boy, whose name was Jimmy, threw both arms above his head, heaved a great sigh and announced in emphatic tones, "Columbia is a fine old Columbia." Then he proceeded to quote Shakespeare and Browning and to lecture à la Brander Matthews. He was pretty noisy about it, and Miss Johnston, Dr. West's office nurse, who had been assisting, undertook to quiet him. He looked at her with solemn curiosity and said very slowly, and with emphasis on each word, "Who are you?" "I'm Miss Johnston," she replied crisply, "and I want you to be quiet." "Oh yes, I know," he responded, with immense satisfaction, "Christie Johnston by Anthony Hope."

Well, the patient I want to tell you about was not a boy, but a good physician, of sixty-five years, Dr. Draper of Bonac. He was unfortunate

enough to have a mastoid. Dr. Vance operated, and did not give a preliminary hypodermic. Dr. Draper started in courageously, taking the ether himself, but as soon as he had enough to lose consciousness and self-control, he gave us a lot of trouble. His tongue fell back in his throat and he choked and turned blue and was a long time going under completely. I thought, compared to Dr. Crandall, who is so dextrous and gentle, that Dr. Vance was rough. He used the curette very little and the mallet and chisel a good deal. There were splinters of bone flying in every direction. It was critical, too. He had to go within only a thin layer of the dura mater.

Finally, it was over, Dr. Draper back in bed, and Dr. Vance and his assistant, having been refreshed with coffee at my suggestion, had gone to meet their office engagements. For a while the Doctor slept and, for another while, he was nauseated. Then he began to talk, meditatively. He said: "All my life I have tried to be considerate of other people, but it makes no difference, I get it in the neck just the same. Getting up nights when I was almost too tired to dress myself, and going out to visit poor women and sick children. I wish I had Dr. Vance here, I'd punch his ear." He moved restlessly and I adjusted the pillow. He regarded me, and said, appraisingly, "You look like a pretty good girl." Then, "Where's my wife?" "She is down stairs," I answered. "She is a damned crank," he asserted seriously. He looked as if he expected a reply, so I said "We are all rather peculiar." "Tell her to come up here," he commanded. I went to the stair and called Mrs. Draper. I told her her husband was only partly out of ether and cautioned her not to mind if he said queer things. She came into the room, a sweet, serene woman of sixty, and sat down by the bed. "Are you comfortable now, dear," she asked. "Why, Rachael," he replied, "I was thinking only of you." And so I left them and went down to my much-delayed dinner.

I was about half through, when I heard Mrs. Draper calling in a startled voice, "Miss Ramsay, Miss Ramsay," I ran up stairs and found that the Doctor was thrusting his fingers under the bandage into his dressing. An ignorant person would have been afraid, even coming out of ether, to meddle with the dressing, but here was the wise man up to mischief. I promptly gave him a hypodermic of morphia and atropia that Dr. Vance had ordered, and reinforced the dressing, for he had disturbed it so much that it had stained through. Then I sat down by the bed and rested my firm hand on his weak one, for that seemed to soothe him. He looked at me seriously and said: "When the Almighty created the heavens and the earth and all that in them is, He very considerably included the word *damn*." Presently he fell asleep; and that was the

last big word I heard. During the remainder of my stay he was a most courteous gentleman.

He made an excellent recovery and I was so glad. I have never lost a child with a mastoid; but I did lose a gentleman about Dr. Draper's age once. He was an interesting man and an artist. I felt apprehensive about the Doctor and was most joyful that he did so well.

Bonac is a little town where all know each other. The Doctor's patients testified their regard for him by coming in a steady procession to the office door bearing boxes and baskets of good things. They brought fruit and flowers, jellies and custards, chickens to broil and chickens to roast, quail, and fresh oysters, everything that the man could need, and some things that he didn't. Mrs. Draper and I had to help dispose of them.

Mrs. Draper was a dear. She was lovely to me all the while I was there and she insisted on stowing my suit case with jars of home-made jelly and bottles of grape juice when I came away. Bonac has water on three sides and I had the loveliest walks over the hills and along the shore. I used to take the Doctor's field glasses with me.

Everything went so well and so happily that I feel more as if I had had a three weeks' vacation, than as if I had been earning my bread. I have this advantage over you, Mary. Your work keeps you in one place, except for vacations, while mine takes me to various corners of this interesting and beautiful world. However, I won't brag too much; for, while you are at home, I am treading other people's stairs.

The Doctor told me a number of stories that bear out my statement that people are funny. Here is one of them. He told me he was visiting a sick woman one day and said to her daughter, who was a high school student, "Bring me a glass and a spoon." As she turned to go out of the room, he added, "Let it be half full of water." The girl was gone some time. When she returned, she said, "I am sorry to have been so long; but I couldn't find a small glass, so I have brought this one." "In one hand she held a large mirror that she had taken from the wall, and in the other, a teaspoon half full of water." When I had finished my laugh, I said, "That seems incredible, Doctor." "You may say so," he replied, "but the same thing happened to me not a fortnight later in another house. I determined not to be caught again; and the next time I asked for a tumbler half full of water and a teaspoon. It was at the time when goblets were fashionable. The woman was gone a long while, but she finally came back with a tumbler half full of water and a teaspoon. She said, 'I'm sorry to have been so long, but I had to go three houses to get a tumbler. We have only goblets.'"

Goodbye, with dearest love,

MARGARET.